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The Happiness of living under the
British Government.

A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE
M U R D E R
OF THE
KING OF THE FRENCH.

PREACHED AT
WALDRON, IN SUSSEX,
On SUNDAY, the 27th of JANUARY, 1793.

By the REV. T. LEWIS, CURATE.

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His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, acting for
the Lower Division of PEVENSEY RAPE,

AND OTHERS ;

The very respectable Persons who associated at MARESFIELD, the 17th of DECEMBER, 1792.

T H I S S E R M O N

I S H U M B L Y I N S C R I B E D ,

By their most obedient Servant,

T H E A U T H O R .

P S A L M cxliv. 15.

HAPPY ARE THE PEOPLE THAT ARE
IN SUCH A CASE.

IF it can be proved that we, who live under the British Government, are blessed and *happy*, in a very high degree, or at least have the means of *happiness* and *prosperity* within our reach, the discovery, when made, should cause our hearts to overflow with thankfulness to HIM who is the supreme Disposer of all events, and the inexhaustible Fountain of all good. Convince a man that his comforts are more numerous than his troubles, that the good he is possessed of is more than sufficient to counterbalance the evil he suffers, and
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you take an effectual method to silence his complaints, and to inspire him with contentment.

In the beginning of this psalm, the Divine Author praiseth the Lord God of Israel for the many personal favours and mercies which he had received at his hands: He says, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my hope and my fortress, my castle and deliverer, my defender in whom I trust."

He observes, towards the latter part of this divine song, that the people cannot but be *happy and flourishing* under a Prince thus favoured and protected by the God of Jacob. That nation which has a *virtuous* Prince on the throne, a Prince, not only *beloved by his subjects* but *highly favoured of Heaven*, shall find deliverance "from the hand of strange Children, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and whose right hand is the right hand

hand of iniquity." Then "their sons will grow up as the young plants, and their daughters will be as the polished corners of the temple;" the nation thus blessed and protected, shall find their "garners full and plenteous with all manner of store; their sheep will bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets; their oxen will be strong to labour, no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in their streets. *Happy indeed* must be the people who are in such a case!"*

What

* The latter part of the verse also, "yea blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God," is peculiarly applicable to us in this land; a land that may be said "to be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." We, above any people under Heaven, are "blessed in having the Lord for our God:" Encouraged, under every trouble and danger, to put our trust in the Lord Jehovah, in HIM who has everlasting strength." Let us hope that we may apply the words of the Psalmist to this quiet land, when horror and discord have fixed their seat in a neighbouring kingdom. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;

What I propose to prove, is, that we who live under the British Government, are *blessed* above the rest of the world, and ought to express our gratitude to the great Governor of the universe, for the singular mercies and blessings we enjoy in this happy land.*

therefore we will not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea : The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

* Happy indeed must the nation be, where the Poor as well as the rich have the means of religious improvement within their reach : "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." We live in that land where the ambassadors of Heaven's King are abroad, to offer to sinners the terms of peace and reconciliation ; where the sceptre of mercy is held forth to every returning sinner.

When I proposed to enumerate the blessings we enjoy in this nation, I intended to dwell, at large, on our happiness in a spiritual sense, in "having the Lord for our God," but I was forced, though reluctantly, to relinquish my original plan, as it led me too far from the principal object I had in view, namely, to mention some of those temporal blessings peculiar to us, who live under the British Government.

There

There are no people under Heaven who have seen clearer instances of the interposition of Providence on their behalf, or have greater means of public prosperity put in their hands, than we of this nation. "As the hills stand about Jerusalem even so standeth the Lord round about his people." May we not as justly say, *as the seas encompass our land, so does the protection of Heaven surround us on every side.*

Innumerable are the blessings peculiar to this nation. Our most excellent and well poised Constitution, by King, Lords and Commons, has been the admiration of all our neighbours. Defended by our wooden walls, (under the protection of that Almighty Being, whose sovereign command the winds and the sea obey,) we have still been able to repel every attack, and to hurl vengeance on our enemies! And may our Navy long continue to ride triumphant on the main! Here slavery, with all her numerous

merous brood of evils, never dares to shew her haggard visage; but Liberty, with her gay smiling train, spreads peace and plenty through this happy land.

Notwithstanding we are thus blessed, happy, and prosperous, I am very sorry to observe, that there are *evil-disposed persons* among us, who endeavour to persuade us that we are *not* so; that our Government is founded on tyranny and oppression: They endeavour to make us a *divided* people, when danger is at the door. "A house or kingdom divided against itself must soon come to desolation." There are some among us who are like froward children, ready to throw away the good they possess, as if of no value; and, as the wise man expresses it, "though a prize is put into their hands" to gain happiness; "still they have not the heart to use it."

When we consider the want of *union*, too visible among us, in those fundamental

mental truths, that concern our safety as a nation, and our existence as a free people, we have much reason to fear that some calamity may soon overtake us.

Were we to consult the history of past ages, it would clearly appear, that the want of unanimity, among those who had one common interest to secure, one common good to pursue, invariably preceded and portended some public calamity : For “ a house or a nation divided against itself must be in great danger,” particularly when threatened by a *foreign* power. What *enemies* must they be to their country, who wish to raise a spirit of discontent among the lower ranks of people, at such a time as this ! Who perplex the minds of those useful members of the commonwealth, with indigested ideas about Government ; filling their heads with changes rung on the words *Liberty* and *Equality*, *Equality* and *Liberty* ; questions which they have neither time to discuss, nor capacity to

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comprehend. To talk of *equality* in the community, is to make use of words without a meaning. Men can no more be equal in their rank in society, than they can be equal in the form of their bodies, or in the accomplishments of their minds. To put the knave, or the fool upon an equality with the man of wisdom, the man of honour, and the man of integrity, is to pervert the order of things. This equality, could it be established, would not last an hour.

God, the great Governor of the Universe, has appointed us our place in society; he has placed some at the head of the community, he has placed others in subordinate stations; some are to command, some to obey. In society there must be those that govern, and those that are governed. Without *subordination* there can be no society. For subordination is the *first*, the *fundamental* law of society.

That

That the arguments made use of in this discourse in favour of submission to Government, may not be perverted through mistake or prejudice, I am happy to embrace this opportunity of making this public declaration, that I am no friend to tyranny or oppression; nor am I an advocate for that doctrine, that Princes are accountable to God only for their actions, and have a property in their subjects, and may use them as they think most conducive to their own pleasure or advantage; a doctrine long since exploded in this kingdom, and which I hope will never be revived.

The Prince, who sways the *British Sceptre*, and wears the *British Crown*, claims no such power. It is his glory to rule according to the known and long established laws of the land, and to be the first magistrate over a free people. And as long as he governs his subjects according to these laws, he is worthy of the highest esteem and honour.

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Those

Those who fear God should honour the King; should greatly honour a good King, "and be subject not only for wrath," that is, from the fear of punishment, "but also for conscience sake; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God."

Submission to Government, which I endeavour to press upon you from a principle of *self-interest*, is enforced in scripture as an indispensable *duty* enjoined by Him who was the Founder of our most Holy Religion, who has in a positive manner commanded us to "render unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things that are God's." The Government, under which the first Christians lived, was an absolute and unlimited monarchy: those who bore the sovereign sway, were tyrannical in a very high degree, were such enemies to the followers of Christ, that many of them were put to death, for no other reason, but because they
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were Christians ; and when they enjoyed any quiet, it was more from the good nature of him who sat on the throne, than from any established law that protected them ; *still* they were to be in subjection to *these higher powers, for the powers that be, are ordained of God.*

But the English Government is so mild and equitable, that it is our highest interest to submit to the best of Monarchs, who rules not only over, but in, the hearts of his subjects. Whose glory it is to be the ruler of a free people. We are as free, perhaps, as freedom can consist with the security of life and property ; any liberty or freedom beyond this, is not liberty, but licentiousness ; not the liberty of society, but the liberty of the savage, who roams alone and unprotected in the wild Deserts of Africa or America.

When we enter into society, we mutually give up these natural rights for

those that are more valuable; among others, the right of securing to our own use, and the use of those that are dear to us, what we acquire by our labour or industry, by our ingenuity or knowledge. Without the absolute security of property there can be no true liberty, nor can any community subsist.

Some are so weak, or wicked, as to look to France with a wishful eye, as if what was done there is a rule for us to follow. The forms of Government in France and England were very different. The King of France had the power, (for the Constitution of that country gave him the power,) to tax his people at his own will and pleasure: they had no fixed laws to protect the subject from the power of the sovereign, when he chose to act the despot. He might take a man away from his family, and confine him in a dungeon, without indulging him even with the form of a trial.— In England personal liberty is secured in

in the strongest manner. The *humble cot* of the peasant being his *castle*, the first nobleman in the land cannot forcibly enter his obscure mansion, except he is sanctioned by the law.—In France, the nobility had the power (and in many instances were too fond of exercising that power,) of treating the inferior people with unexampled severity; and, neither the Constitution of that country, nor any laws then existing, were properly calculated to guard them from oppression. And I cannot but confess, that for a considerable time, I was a well wisher to the measures first adopted in that country; for the old system of Government was certainly very corrupt, and wanted reformation. But it requires the utmost delicacy when any steps are taken to alter a long-established form, though fundamentally defective. For see what they are come to!—They are now in a worse state than they were before. Those who first planned and promoted the reformation, have in general disappeared;

peared; some of them are shut up in prison, some murdered, and some forced to seek for shelter in foreign kingdoms.

And to conclude the shocking catastrophe, they have now murdered, *cruelly murdered* their King!—Murdered him with a *superlative degree of savage barbarity*!—Staining their garments with the blood of the royal victim! That blood which will one day or other fall with accumulated vengeance on the heads of them or their children! Blood has a voice that cries aloud for vengeance, and if the guilty should escape in this life, which is not always the case, the almighty arm of Him who rules above the sky, *can* and *will* pursue them even beyond the grave!

Can we then, after all this, look up to that distracted country as a pattern for our imitation? Shall we look for law, for order, or regularity from that nation, where discord and confusion have fixed
their

their abode?—No. We must turn our views to our own Government for that security and quiet, which have for some time been banished out of that turbulent kingdom.

The English Constitution is a most noble fabrick, a structure that has stood for ages, which has afforded liberty and protection to millions of our forefathers, and I hope will afford the same security to ages yet unborn: And if, from time it may want some gentle reform, we trust that what may be done with safety, will be done by the constituted power at a convenient opportunity. But let us hope, that the present Minister, under whose auspices this nation has risen from the brink of ruin to its present state of affluence and prosperity, will not so far lose his wonted prudence, as to hazard the dangerous attempt at this important crisis.

It

It is the general complaint, nor is it ill-founded, that we are heavily burthened with taxes. Having the interest of an enormous debt to pay, it cannot be otherwise; a debt, that has been accumulating for almost a century. Yet to cheer this gloomy prospect, let us behold with heart-felt pleasure, what has been already done by the present Administration to lower the debt, and to ease us of a part of our burthen.

Those who are fond of dwelling on the dark side of the prospect, still urge, that we are a very distressed people. But let us enquire where these distresses are so very apparent. We cannot perceive much room for this complaint, either among the higher or the generality of the middle ranks in society. As to the lower mechanic and day labourer, the hardships they suffer proceed chiefly from the dearness of the necessities of life; and not so much from what they contribute towards the support

port of the State ; as every Administration for years past, when any additional burthens have been laid on the community, have taken every prudent step in their power to screen that useful body of people. “ Bread, that strengthens man’s heart,” advanced considerably in price the beginning of this Winter, owing, in a great measure, to the distresses of the French, who wanted such grain and other articles of food, as they could procure from this country: Every cargo, of that description, has been watched with a wishful eye, by those miserable people, as it approached their desolate shores. But the steps taken by his Majesty in Council have had the desired effect, in lowering that most necessary article of life, to a standard, below which, perhaps, it cannot be the true interest, even of the poor themselves, to see it reduced.

It is by no means foreign to my present subject, “ *The happiness of living*
D *under*

under the British Government" to take notice of the *Poor Laws*, a glorious provision, peculiar to this country, for the indigent of all ages and every condition.

When we consider the enormous sum raised every year towards their support, (a full fourth of the rental of the land in many parts of the kingdom,) we must allow, that their hardships are not so numerous as what a superficial view of the subject would lead us to imagine. At all events, they have this source of consolation, a consolation that never fails, if they submit with becoming patience and resignation to the will of HIM who orders our lot ; He, as the common Father of all, will abundantly reward them when they come to that state, where all the inequalities of this life shall be properly adjusted. When the scene is closed for ever, it will be immaterial, whether we have acted an high or a subordinate part on the

the stage of this world ; they who shall have performed their parts with propriety, will most certainly meet the applause of Him who gave us our being.

Though the poor in every country are more or less distressed, still, their distresses in England are not to be compared with what they suffer in other parts of Europe ; not to mention what they suffer in France at this time, having little or no employment, pinched with cold and hunger.

Let us pray the Almighty to remove civil discord from our land. For no war is so full of horror and desolation as a *civil* war ; when the subjects of the same prince, the inhabitants of the same country, the professors of the same religion, nay sometimes, those that sucked the same breast, stain their hands in each others blood ! The bare recital of the cruelties committed in a neighbouring kingdom, in a few months

only, would abundantly prove, that *civil* discord is one of the most dreadful scourges that the Almighty inflicts on a wicked land.

That we and our posterity may continue to be thus highly favoured of Heaven, that the blessings we now enjoy may flow in one uninterrupted stream to the very end of time, let us fear to offend HIM, who is the supreme, the impartial Ruler of the Universe, and who will not acquit the wicked. "A fruitful land maketh he barren for the iniquity of them that dwell therein." When other nations are visited with the *sword* or *famine*, we should take warning from their doom; that we may escape their punishment, let us not partake of their crimes; we should consider the rod and Him who hath ordained it. "And when the judgments of the Almighty are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness."

To

To conclude : If, amidst the innumerable mercies and blessings peculiar to us, we have still some grievances to complain of, some hardships to endure, let us remember, that as yet we belong to that state of being, where perfect happiness and felicity are no one's lot ; we are *men* and not *angels* ; and " Man, in some degree or other, is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." The cup of bliss which has no portion of evil to embitter it, the joy that has no pain to allay it, are reserved for another, and a more perfect state of things. Let us then anticipate that joyful morn which the Archangel's trump shall proclaim, when we shall spring from our clay-cold habitations, happy, glorious, and immortal !

'Till this blissful day dawns upon us, a day without a cloud, let us bless the Almighty for all the spiritual and temporal blessings, which we enjoy in this highly favoured nation ; that we
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are still in a state of safety ; that we have still “ Peace within our walls, and plenteousness in our habitations : ” That we live in a land where liberty, not anarchy bears the sovereign sway ; where Prince and People have but one common interest, namely, **To MAKE EACH OTHER HAPPY ! Amen.**

F I N I S.

